



## **VCF statement on the use of bearded vultures for shows**

**May 2014**

During the last decade the use of birds of prey for shows, flight demonstrations, and education programs has increased rapidly, including in the zoological institutions. In May 2006 the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) produced recommendations on this matter, suggesting that the EEP coordinator/studbook keeper has the right to decide if the respective species can be used for shows, and that the welfare of the individual birds must be respected, housing them according to the EEP guidelines, and that they must showcase natural behaviour.

Since 2012 a few bearded vulture chicks in some European zoos and private collections have been raised to be used in flight shows, thus subtracting them from the captive breeding program. As a consequence, it was necessary to cancel the release of young birds in several bearded vulture reintroduction sites in some years, due to the low number of chicks available for hacking.

The purpose of the bearded vulture international breeding programme - which started in 1978, 14 years before EAZA was formed - has always been to support the bearded vulture reintroduction projects. In 1993 this breeding programme was upgraded to an *European Endangered Species Programme* (EEP). This EEP has some unique characteristics.

- It has partners that are not EAZA members, including specialized captive breeding centres which are run by governmental authorities
- The ownership of almost all birds in the programme rests with the Vulture Conservation Foundation, which also works as the *Species Committee* for the bearded vulture.

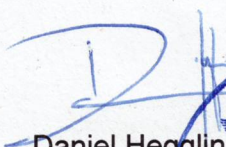
Until 2012 none of the birds included in this international breeding programme had been sold. However, more recently the situation changed and some birds from EEP partners have been sold for flight shows. This is a very worrying development as it opens the doors for a market for bearded vultures and endangers the successes of the on-going reintroduction projects.

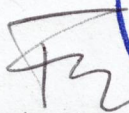
Under this context, the VCF, as the bearded vulture EEP coordinator and the *EEP Species Committee*, has decided that no birds (either VCF-owned birds or vultures owned by the EEP partners) within the program should be used for flight shows, as they are in conflict with the EEP requirements and objectives. In order to counteract this dangerous development the VCF has further decided that institutions that use bearded





vultures for shows or provide them to third parties for this kind of use, will be expelled from the bearded vulture international breeding program.

  
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